

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

Hearing Date: March 11, 2021 8:00 AM

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COMMENTS FOR: HB 463

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Kimberly Young

Election Integrity Project of Nueces County

Corpus Christi, TX

This bill greatly improves qualifications for poll watchers. Who wants a convicted felon being a poll watcher? Not us! And who wants a person with a misdemeanor related to elections being a poll watcher? Not us! Thank you for taking these steps to ensure we have outstanding citizens watching our polls.

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Sandra Kelly

self

Denton, TX

Permitting individuals in a polling place or where ballots are being counted should be reserved for those trained and registered, nonpartisan or equal representation only but no political clothing / other. Nov 202 was an example of exactly what not should happen at polling and ballot counting locations across the country. Those working at polling locations, ballot counting and as elections officials should not be threatened or harassed in any form whether at the location, at their homes, at their place of businesses or through social media. This is unacceptable in a country that purports itself to be a democracy.

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Mark Coppock

Self

Bryan, TX

I STRONGLY OPPOSE HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has the right to vote, their ability to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed.

The unintended consequence of this election bill is that it will block transparency of how votes are counted.

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Dennis Botkin, Supplier Quality Engineer

JBS

Richardson, TX

Stop HB463 it increases voter fraud and undermines the necessary transparency to assure voter integrity I want it voted down.

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Jerry Stevens

self, musician

Austin, TX

I oppose HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has

the right to vote, their ability to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed.

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karen miller

my self

Georgetown, TX

I oppose HB 463 why not count the votes as they are voted for. we need to be transparent!! machines can be misused. Lets do one day voting also.

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Sandra Hayes, Ms

Self. Sometimes contract labor in the schools accompanying students (when they are in school)

Georgetown, TX

Really have great concern that poll watchers are able to observe every vote cast. The lack of transparency has brought our whole country to a tremendous crisis. Do no harm in these elections. Every vote should be counted, transparent with no chance of illegitimate vote. PLEASE DO NOT PASS THIS BILL. Revise it to make sure every vote is counted accurately and that observers have complete freedom in being able to check out the accuracy of these votes. The country has suffered enough. Texas is big enough to ensure and protect EVERY vote. WITHOUT questions being raised.....meaning...complete transparency. Please do not pass this bill.

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Thomas Tolleson

self, assistant to owner of shelter

Houston, TX

Why can't poll watchers record what they see and hear during their watching time?

Without cameras, phones, evidence of malfeasance during an election would be reduced to hearsay.

"Can you prove it?" "No, HB 463 eliminated that possibility."

Please strike this part of HB 463:

"(A) will not have possession of a device capable of recording images or sound or that the appointee will disable or deactivate the device while serving as a watcher"

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Wanda Dietel

self

Sunnyvale, TX

We oppose HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has the right to vote, their ability to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed.

The unintended consequence of this election bill is that it will block transparency of how votes are counted.

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Mike Gepner

Self self employed

Cedar Creek, TX

I oppose this bill. We need transparency in voting counting!

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Larry Ringler

self - retired

Portland, TX

I greatly support this bill to help ensure that only highly qualified citizens are able to work as poll watchers.

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Aaron Ramirez

Nueces

Corpus Christi, TX

This bill makes sense. Who would really want members of our community who don't represent the community well working at polls? We need to have some level of integrity at these sites. We should reserve such fragile positions to someone we can trust.

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Cinde Weatherby, LWVTX Voting Rights/Election Law Ch.

League of Women Voters of Texas

Austin, TX

These comments are provided on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Texas ?IN OPPOSITION TO HB 463.? We appreciate the opportunity to forward these comments to you for today's meeting. Thank you for allowing us to share the LWVTX position on this bill.

Intertwined within our mission of empowering voters, are the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. LWVTX opposes HB 463 because it discriminates against those who have served their felony sentences and fully satisfied the court's orders.

HB 463 would preclude those who have been convicted of a felony from being appointed as a poll watcher. The Election Code states that a person who is a "qualified voter" is eligible to serve as a poll watcher. If a person has been convicted of a felony, that person under Texas law is a "qualified voter" when the ?person's sentence has been fully discharged, including any term of incarceration, parole, or supervision, or completed a period of probation ordered by any court. ?(See Texas Election Code, Section 11.02.)

Texas law provides for the rehabilitation of a person's right to vote after being convicted of a felony. We believe that right to vote ought to include the right to participate fully in the election process, including eligibility to be appointed as a poll watcher.

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Patricia Estus

Self - Office Manager

San Antonio, TX

I oppose HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has the right to vote, their ability to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed.

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Sarah Shah

Self

Houston, TX

Transparency is critical in ensuring the integrity of our elections. I oppose HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has the right to vote, their ability to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed. The unintended consequence of this election bill is that it will block transparency of how votes are counted.

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James Skowbo

Self

Georgetown, TX

We oppose HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has the right to vote, their ability to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed.

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Julie Kellogg

self, self employed insurance agent

Corpus Christi, TX

Poll watchers are a vital part of the election process, they must have the highest standards applied to them. Standards that ensure voting integrity should be a non-partisan issue. Criminal records factor into so much of what a person can or cannot do, that is a consequence of choices they made. Those choices reflect character, and those with poor character should not be allowed to monitor election proceedings, our vote is too important to allow that risk.

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Catherine Thompson, Mrs.

Self

Austin, TX

Please stop HAB 463! We need transparency in vote counting and this bill jeopardizes the basic right to have your vote counted properly.

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Anne Rowbotham

Great state republicans

Hallettsville, TX

I oppose this bill.

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Peggy Irwin

Faithwalk Fellowship

San Antonio, TX

I oppose HB 463 because it prevents vote counting transparency at the polls and the central counting stations. If an individual has the right to vote, their ability to be an election watcher to detect vote counting fraud should not be infringed or obstructed.

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Rachel Maguire

self==taxpayer

Brenham, TX

oppose

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Bonnie Seelig

Self - Retired

Spicewood, TX

Unintended consequences of HB 463 Section may cause more problems than remedies in the following section: (A)will not have possession of a device capable of recording images or sound or that the appointee will disable or deactivate the device while serving as a watcher. A poll watcher's job is to watch and to point out incidences of concern. All the examples of voter fraud that are taken seriously by all happen when the incident can be seen on video recording or a self-confession. The election is over and court cases and discussions and uncertainties continue unless quick action and prevention takes place. Security of the ballot boxes, machines and thumb drives must occur. No unattended boxes, machines or thumb drives. Recordings will prove this.

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Jesse Suarez

Rabalais I&E Constructors

Corpus Christi, TX

If a felon isn't allowed to vote why would they be allowed to serve as a poll watcher? And why water down the quality of poll watchers by allowing persons convicted of election misdemeanors? This bill greatly increases election integrity.

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Ben Brown

Self- Retired

Fairview, TX

I support HB 463. Poll watching is a position of trust and it make sense to restrict poll watchers to be non-felons.

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Kirk Pate, Mr.

Self

Flatonia, TX

It is absurd to on the one hand characterize voting as sacred and restore voting rights to convicted felons who have paid their dues, and then on the other hand assert that a felon who performs the sacred duty of voting is not fit to perform a lesser duty of serving as a poll worker.

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William Schwind

Self

NEW BRAUNFELS, TX

I am concerned about the impact of HB 463 on WATCHERS at the central counting station on election day.

This often overlooked function is the nerve center for Texas election integrity. Having been an observer, as an authorized appointee, at my county's election counting station, I can testify that when all the votes are present in this one location, the potential for irregularities is at its highest.

We need more watching, not less.

WATCHING does not impede the vote tabulation, but it does add a level of confidence in the final results. This is good for all voting citizens.

Please make it easier to be a watcher.

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Arthur Simon

self, artist

Austin, TX

I oppose this bill because it is unclear which government entity would be charged with enforcing the change in law.

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Stephanie Gomez

Common Cause Texas

Houston, TX

This is an anti-democratic bill.

HB 463 would change Texas law to prohibit persons who have been finally convicted of any felony from serving as poll watchers.

Poll watchers are tasked with literally watching our elections processes and alerting officials if any issues come up – they are a vital part ensuring our elections are free and fair.

Currently, the law does not allow anyone who has been “finally convicted of an offense in connection with conduct directly attributable to an election” to serve as a poll watcher. Poll watchers have to meet certain criteria in order to be designated as poll watchers.

Expanding the criteria to limit people from participating in this form of service simply because they have a felony conviction only further limits the democratic participation of Texans.

Given that Texas is one of the nation’s leaders in the criminalization of Black people and people of color, HB 463 stands as an example of yet another systemic barrier to democratic participation cfor BIPOC across Texas.

The codification of restrictions to civic participation shows up insidiously in our society. From jury service to casting a ballot, felony convictions are weaponized to purposefully people kept out of civic participation.

Black individuals are more likely to face incarceration across the nation, representing 40% of the incarcerated population despite representing only 13% of the US population. In an era defined by mass incarceration, Texas has the 6th highest state imprisonment rate in the nation.

Felony disenfranchisement is institutionalized racism, and HB 463 is a bill rooted in racism that will further disparities in political participation and representation. We should be focusing on policies that increase equity, accessibility, and participation in our democracy.

Poll watchers are a necessary part of our election infrastructure and our democracy. People who serve as poll watchers are serving their communities. HB 463 cannot be allowed to further limit who can participate in our democratic processes.

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Jennifer Lane

self

Denton, TX

I didn't realize the bills were being taken out of order. My previous comment sent regarding DPDS and the difficulties of obtaining a Voter ID card for a voter who needed one was in reference to HB 463. Please ensure that it is attached to the hearing for HB463. Thank you.

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Valerie Street

Texas Progressive Action Network

Austin, TX

Texas Progressive Action Network stands opposed to HB 463, a bill that would seek to bar individuals who have been finally convicted of any felony from serving as poll watchers.

As it stands currently, Texas does not allow anyone "finally convicted of an offense in connection with conduct directly attributable to an election" to serve as a poll watcher. To broaden the criteria to further exclude anyone with a felony conviction from serving their communities and democratic process in this way, including barring anyone who has finished the terms of their probation and parole, only further stigmatizes individuals trying to come back into society.

When registering individuals to vote who are what's considered to be "off paper" - having finished out the terms of their probation and/or parole - our organization has seen people so eager to regain their right to vote and voice in democracy and that enthusiasm has extended to checking the box to serve in some capacity as an election worker. Indeed, it has been our collective experience as VDRs for multiple years now that these individuals are frequently the ones who are willing to check that box.

HB 463 does a disservice to the Texans working to build back their lives and presence in their communities through service in our democratic process and we urge committee members to move past this legislation in favor of policies that are good for voters and good for the volunteers who help our elections run.

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THOMAS BRASHEAR

SELF

Mesquite, TX

Please vote against HB 463. Texans deserve full transparency and honest vote counting. This Bill does not provide full transparency and honest counting of the votes. Respectfully, Thomas P. Brashear, Mesquite, TX, HD 107, SD 2

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Roy Smith, pastor

Self Pastor

Florence, TX

We need transparency in our election process. We need qualified people to watch the election process including poll watchers to insure the integrity of the counting process. We also need voter ID to insure that only qualified registered voters are allowed to vote . Thank you for your service and consideration of my request.  
Roy Smith , Pastor

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TELEFUS CAWYER, MR

SELF

Hideaway, TX

I AM AGAINST HB463 BECAUSE IT DIES NOT GUARANTEE A TRUE AND OPENLY HONEST VOTE COUNT DURING ELECTIONS. FRAUD IS THE WORST THING THAT CAN HAPPEN IN A CONSTITUTIONAL ELECTION. WE CANNOT ALLOW THE CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES TO BE ELIMINATED OR WE WILL BECOME A SOCIALISTIC BANANA REPUBLIC!!

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Preston Martinkus, poll watcher,Parker co.

Parker county conservatives &.self

Weatherford, TX

I oppose this bill,I oppose voter fraud'

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Ramon DeWitt, Mr

Self

Red Rock, TX

Bad idea. Throw this in the trash.

Ray DeWitt

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